In their search for traditional materials folklore collectors often overlook the humorous tales of the Indians. Somehow the general impression has spread around that the Indian is a ~~noble~~ grim and somewhat tragic ~~figure~~ character with very little knowledge of the comic muse. This impression is a distinctly wrong one; for inherently, at least, the Indian character is full of good humor. Especially they are fond of playing tricks, which is, perhaps why ~~they~~ one of their ~~the~~ favorite ~~mythmaker spirit~~ is Wak-sok-o Jak.

1126-6th.Ave West, Calgary, Alta.
April 23rd. 1945.

Robert E. Gard Esq.
Editor,
Alberta Folklore Quarterly
University of Alberta.
Edmonton, Alta.

Dear Sir., I am enclosing herewith a short history of Priddis Alberta which I trust will be of interest to you, and , I hope , of use to you in your Quarterly,

With best wishes for your success, I am

Yours very truly
W. J. Ockley.

Sapper W. J. Ockley, R. C. E.

1126- 6th. Ave West

Calgary, Alta.

W. J. Ockley

1000 words

Written by
W. J. Ockley.

Written for Robert E. Gard
University of Alberta.

Priddis.

The older settled communities of Alberta are, allmost without exception, either in the foothills of the Rockies or ajacent to some stream or other never-failing source of water supply, but the foothills areas were the most favored as the ranchers had an abundance of feed, shelter and water for their stock, besides all the necessary fuel and building material at close hand for their use. Such a well-favoured spot is the little hamlet of Priddis, situated by road twenty-five miles south-west of Calgary, This place is particulary well-favoured as it has an abundance of good timber, clear running water in both it's branches of Fish Creek which meanders through nearly all the old ranches and a great many of the newer established farmsteads. It's coal mines are of historical interest as besides furnishing many thousand tons of high-grade steam coal, it was from these that the first high-grade blacksmith coal was freighted to Edmonton by some of the old-time Freighters with oxen, horse and mule teams long before the Calgary and Edmonton railroad was built. At that time the coal fetched three dollars per ton at the pit mouth and, owing to high transportation costs sold in Edmonton at sixty dollars per ton.

It's timber limits has, in the past, produced considerable wealth in it's millions of feet of fine spruce lumber, and it's young forest will, if properly conserved, be a source of wealth for generations yet to come. Then too, many a young farmer and farmer's son has gained a lot of spending money throughout the winter months trapping along it's hills and streams, and many a larder has been

replentished by the herds of deer that range the hills,

At the turn of the century, ranching was practically the only major industry carried on, but as the country became more settled and the range land disappeared inside fences, people gradually turned from ranching to mixed farming, dairying, poultry raising and market gardening, with some fur farming on the smaller holdings, and today the sight of a rollicking cowboy with his picturesque costume is something of a rarity, his era has gone into the past, never to return, and though some of them are still with us, they are quite content now to do their cowpunching on foot with a herd of gentle milch cows, and to sit of a summer's evening outside their door and dream of the days gone by when freedom and adventure was the order of the day, and their rambles knew no boundries or fences, and far horizons were the limit of their vision.

In October, 1885, James Ockley, an exBritish Soldier, Survayor and discharged member of Steel's Scouts through the North West Rebellion of that year, seeking a place to settle down from his wanderings over the Globe, and establish a home, rode out from the then Village of Calgary, and came to the forks of Fish Creek Crossing; there he rode on for an other couple of miles up the main branch, and stoped to rest his horse and eat his lunch, and liking the location he returned to town and filled on a homestead, pre-emption, and Rebellion Scripts, and thus became the first land owner in that locality, although another man, Charles Priddis by name, after whome the District was named, had two years previously, built a shack and wintered some survey horses there. IT might also b e mentioned here that where Mr Ockley ate his lunch that day there is a modern nursery today.

The following January Mr Priddis, or "Charlie Priddis, as he was better known by, homesteaded the land at the "Forks" upon which his l land stood, and shortly after, more settlers having taken up land, a post-office was established at "Charlie's" place, and for the benifit of the postal authorities the post-office was named after him, but for many years after the community was still called "the "Forks" by the old timers. In three or four years, a few families with children having settled thereabouts, the need for a school was felt and again "Charlie's" shack was brought into use for taht purpose untill a log school could be built, thus the centre of comunity life was established at the "Forks" with "Charlie" Priddis as it's leader. In time a public hall was built, a store and blacksmith shop was started, and a Church was built and social life with community dances, church services and general gettogether's began to tone down the rough spots from this frontier outpost, and civilization in it's more refined forms became the order of the day.

A comunity hall was always one of the first public buildings to be built after a church and a school, and the resorsefullness and determination of these early pioneers was exemplified by the ways and means by which they attained their objective with their limited means at hand. One instance of many is the Priddis hall, built over forty years ago and still doing service for dances, picture shows, political meetings, or waht have y you. Shortly after the school had been built a dance was being held there one night, and the crowd was so big that the people inside could hardly get out and the people outside could hardly get in

so a few of the community leaders got together to discuss ways and means of building a decent-sized public hall, and in less than an hour's time their plans were made, and before the party broke up that night over four hundred dollars had been collected and a hall board building commity had been formed, and the newly appointed secretary had been given deffinate instructions to leave no stone unturned whereby the extra funds might be collected, so he immediatly solicited the help and support of any big firm he could think of who sold any products used by members of the settlement. The Hudson's Bay Company. T. Eatons. Robert Simpson's. Tuckets Tobaco Company McDonald Tobaco Company, the various Distillers and brewers, all received his solicitations, and all responded nobly, and before the summer was half over a fine new community hall stood finished and ready for action. No profesional builder had been employed, and no money had been spent for labour, and although the floor is sagging in spots, the roof and walls still stand as straight and true as the day they were built, and although the builders have all gone to their last reward, the building still stands as a material example and a monument of rememberance to the men who reconized no difficulty to hard ~~too hard~~ to surmount, nor no task too large for their means and muscle.

Sometimes the determination of an occasional pioneer to get ahead took form in practices that weren't exactly Cricket " and many such instances are recalled by members of the pioneers when they got together for a yarn about old times. Tales are told of a man who got six colts from a team of geldings in one year, and another instance of a man who owned a very motherly cow who managed

to raise five ~~cows~~ CALVES in one summer, thus increasing the mans herd by 400%, and another man who managed to collect enough wire to fence in a section of land which he didn't own, and then grumbling at the price of staples to fasten it on the posts, but such as they were few and far between and they generally received short shift and swift justice when found out.

The early history of any community is a saga of commedy and tragedy, and Priddis is no exception, but pioneers think lightly of t tragedy as brooding over misshaps is not part of their nature, and out of the past comes tales of exploits that adds an unforgetable glamour to their lives, Charlie Priddis furnished material for many a delightful yarn. "Charlie was a gentleman of the old school, well educated, and well brought up in an Eastern home, but he had one failing which weas a ~~failing~~ LIKING for alcholic beverages, but though he often slipped off the water wagon he never forgot himself, In fact the "tighter" Charlie got the more gentlemany he was, but his exploits while in this condition would make a first-class comedy for a modern movie. One story concernes him and a gentleman by the name of "Moonshine "Wilson" who opperated a still in the early days prohibation days on what was afterwards called Whisky Creek in remembrance of him after he came to an untimely end in a barroom brawl in a norhtern outpost town. One summer day Charlie made arangements to meet "Moonshine" on top of a certain hill for the purpose of purchasing some of Wilsons wares. on the appointed day "Carlie" saddled up old "Tim" and rode to his rendezvous, but he made the fatal mistake of donning a bright red sweater in lieu of a shirt, and "Moonshine" spotting the rider in the bright sweater

immediatly thought it was a "Mounty" on his trail, and, having no desire to make the acquaintance of any member of the "Force" he immediatly turned tail and fled, and "Charlie spying him and not knowing what it was all about, took after him and they spent most of that summer afternoon playing tag among the hills and valleys untill "Charlie", being the best mounted of the two, finally caught up to Wilson, and they spent the restbof the day in the shade of a friendly spruce quenching their thirst and consoling each other over their escape from what might have been a great tragedy for the both of them.

Election day in the old Tetritorial days was another source of g great happenings, and as polling booths were few and far between the ranchers and cowboys always took the day off, and, as liquid refreshments were always furnished in generous quantitys, and in the quick-changing times the voters ,after having ridden many miles would find out when it was too late, that they had no vote in that division, and naturally, this caused resentment, and the course of their ire took many forms, and one instance is recalled, and often repeated about a certain man whose appointment as deputy-returning-officer was none too popular. He established the polling booth in his ranch house, and, during the day he had occasion to retire to the outhouse for a few minutes, and a long, lean Texan, a ranch foreman, having been informed he had no vote at this polling booth immediatly seized upon this oppertunity for revenge, so he took down his lariat and threw a deft loop over the building, then taking a "dallas" around the saddle horne he started off down the road with the outhouse in tow, and the D.R.C., naturally becoming alarmed

stuck his head out through the hole in the seat, and yelled to all and suhdry for help, but before help was forthcoming he took a merry ride for some distance behind the galloping horse, however some of his friends of the same political faith soon effected a rescue and he was restored in a somewhat ruffled state to the dignity of his office.

In passing ,memory brings back many faces gone before but not forgotten, but who, in passing, played their part in making the history of Priddis, among them is George Gamsby, who when a mere lad, wandered across the United States from Ontario , across the Rockie Mountains , up the west coast to Vancouver, and then back through the ~~Rockies when~~ Canadian Rockies when they were a untrodden wilderness, to join the first detachment of the original North-West Mounted Police at old Fort McLeod, after being with them for three years he took his discharge and drifted to Priddis and opened up one of the first coal mines in that district. At the outbreak of the South African War he sold out his property and enlisted under Colonel Sam Steel, after this he returned to Priddis and took up land further West and lived there till he passed on.

George Young, the owner of the old Wescott Ranch, afterwards the Melrose Ranch and renamed the Bradfield Ranch, so named by it's purchaser, Dr Grey Ph.D., D.D., and head of Bradfield College in England, who eventually sold it to P. Burns Ranches Ltd. Then "Bill" Standish, who built the first two-story residence in the little Village, and whose son opened up the first blacksmith shop in Priddis. Only one of "Bill's" sons still resides in the district,

Joe Standish by name, who, together with his sons opperate one of the Provinces leading Ayreshire herds, but his grandsons still hold some of the farms in the community, and they too still have the faith and beliefs in the community that they inhereted from their venerated Grandfather.

Then "Little Jimmie Hunter, and Big Jim Hunter, two cousins from Scotland, who added their influence in making the foundations for the prosperous community it is today. They, together with a few more Presbyterians, built the first perspbyterian church in Priddis . They are gone and the Church is gone, and the property on which the church stood is now a prosperous mink ranch.

Presbyterian Hill, Whisky Creek, Chicken King's Corner, Chances Lake, all places with a story that weaves into the warp and woof of the history of the community and floats by in the memorie of the old-timers, of the "Dear dead days beyond recall". Places where in the old days the herds of stock roamed at will and unhampered by f fences, and where now stands modern farm buildings admidst well tilled acres, and those who follow after look forward to the future with the same brand of faith and courage that that the pioneers had so many years ago, and the valley of the "Forks" goes on in it's peaceful way, ever changing yet ever changless.

--------The end----------